




Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**

**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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**MOTION: BUY QUEENSLAND**

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (5.35 pm): The LNP has been called on again to provide comment and been asked to endorse Labor's so-called signature policy. We are called on again to comment on why this government continually picks fights with the federal government on anything and everything, challenging concerns raised by the federal trade minister—real concerns for Queensland. We also share concerns that have been expressed by many in the community, including key economists.

While copying nearly word for word our policy from June 2013, the difference is the secondary agenda—the reported business agenda—to appease union and environmental stakeholders. I repeat: this lazy government has copied nearly word for word our policy from 2013. I table a copy of that policy.

*Tabled paper:* Document titled 'Queensland Procurement Policy, June 2013' [[1623](#)].

I table a copy of the government's policy from this year, which proves my point that we cannot get any lazier than this government.

*Tabled paper:* Department of Housing and Public Works—document titled 'Queensland Procurement Policy 2017' [[1624](#)].

I am sure most on the other side have not even read the policy, so I offer for them to do so. They have added a few things like, 'We will back suppliers that act ethically', 'work to minimise carbon emissions', and 'taking into account workplace policies and practices that address domestic and family violence'. The policy also references net zero emissions by 2050 and having PVs on roofs. We can all imagine how the evaluation of those tenders will go within the department.

It is timely that we remind the House that this government has a horrendous record. In the dying days of the Bligh government we all remember the complete mockery of their Buy Local campaign—we have that one today too—when they bought T-shirts from Bangladesh and the US. I table a copy of that policy document.

*Tabled paper:* Article from the *Sunday Mail*, dated 17 April 2011, titled 'Queensland's "Buy Local" T-shirts made in Bangladesh and the US' [[1625](#)].

We all know that this policy will cost taxpayers more, making Queenslanders worse off through higher prices for services and goods delivered or purchased by the Queensland government. The policy defines the term 'local' for Queensland firms as a company within a 125km radius of the tendered work. It talks about giving a 30 per cent weighting. Companies will not have to pre-qualify for contracts under \$1 million. However, what they will not tell us is how the evaluation will be conducted. We know little will change.

This policy is a fake policy providing false hope in trying to re-engineer our society and trying to use government procurement to cure social issues along the way. More disturbing is that Labor are happily loading costs into the economic base to bolster its chances at the next election. We heard a lot today about championing populist policy to try to win votes from One Nation. While they claim they do not do that, this policy is heading down that slippery slope.

For a state that prides itself on its export and import revenue and opportunities, I find it disturbing that the minister responsible for this policy described it as 'breaking the government's trade agreements'. I add that he said that he could not give a toss. That exposes that this recklessness is no accident.

On 28 July this year, Premier Palaszczuk said that the Queensland government works to promote free trade agreements to benefit Queensland. The following day she declared that the state government will no longer be constrained or bound by free trade agreements. If free trade agreements benefit Queensland, why does Premier Palaszczuk want to abandon them? I table for the benefit of the House a summary of the Palaszczuk government's chaos over this very policy.

*Tabled paper:* Media release, dated 1 September 2017, titled 'Pitt shows Palaszczuk Cabinet In Chaos Over Buy Queensland Policy' [\[1626\]](#).

We had the Treasurer on ABC Radio trying to water down inflammatory remarks by the Premier. Then the 'I do not give a toss' Minister for Housing and Public Works, backed by the agriculture minister, made statements and bought into this chaos. In the same interview, the Treasurer conceded that it is a protectionism procurement agenda.

The importance of free trade agreements and our \$41 billion in exports is under threat. We know that 70 per cent of Queensland's exports last year were to countries with which Australia already has a free trade agreement. By walking away from these agreements Labor is walking away from Queensland farmers and businesses that sell Queensland's products, produce and services to the world economy, putting many Queensland jobs at risk—many jobs in regional Queensland, like those in my electorate.

We know that 84 per cent of state government contracts are already awarded to Queenslanders. The question is—and it is a billion dollar question: will this policy provide more opportunities for government procurement spend than the expected loss of Queensland exports to those countries that we have free trade agreements with that will dump us as soon as they can? The Premier and her three predecessors—Goss, Beattie and Bligh—gave written commitments to be bound by Australia's free trade agreements. The Queensland government itself is a party to the Australian-New Zealand Government Procurement Agreement, but I suppose those opposite just do not give a toss.

There are reckless elements to this policy and it is putting Queensland jobs at risk. This is a gamble. We are gambling with \$41 billion in critical exports to those countries that have engaged in free trade agreements. Many of these agreements were hard fought. We are gambling to provide a maximum opportunity to Queensland businesses to tender on a maximum spend of \$2.9 billion. This is a gamble—a roll of the election dice. There appears to be more downsides than benefits, and I am not convinced it is worth the effort.